



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 13, 2013

MEDIA CONTACTS
Carmenlita Chief | 928.255.3428
Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253
Krista Thompson | 928.871.7160
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

**Resource and Development Committee sends
large-quantity water use permits to Navajo Nation Council for final vote**

WINDOW ROCK – The Resources and Development Committee considered significant legislation on Tuesday requesting the approval of two Navajo Nation water-use permits for the Animas La Plata Project Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline (ALP NNMP) in Upper Fruitland, N.M.

Council Delegate Roscoe Smith (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) co-sponsored Legislation No. 0102-12, which sought water-use permits for two ALP NNMP projects.

One permit will authorize 4,680 acre-feet per year from the Animas La Plata Project, while the second permits will authorize 2,600 acre-feet per year from the Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline in Upper Fruitland.

The permits will be granted to the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, in order to convey water to it customers via the San Juan River Animas La Plata Project and the San Juan River “Run of the River” Water Project.

Jason John, principal hydrologist for the Navajo Department of Water Resources, provided the legislation’s technical and historical background.

John explained that the water is a part of the San Juan Navajo Water Rights Settlement signed in 2010 by former Navajo President Joe Shirley and former Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

“Usually these permits only require approval from the Department of Water Resources. However, the Navajo Nation Code states that water quantities of this size must be approved by the Resources and Development Committee,” John said.

Delegate Smith noted that the Navajo Department of Justice informed the Department of Water Resources that the RDC can exercise the discretion to refer the legislation to the Navajo Nation Council due to the large quantity of water.

“This is a large amount of water, and the legislation will go to the full Navajo Nation Council,” said RDC chair Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta).

Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete (Chinle) questioned potential water usage, and if any would be used by nearby municipalities.

“If the water is kept behind the Ridges Basin Dam, it is untreated,” said Delegate Pete. “Will the water be pumped into a municipal treatment plant and used by our Navajo communities?”

The Navajo Nation has storage rights in the Ridges Basin Dam, said John, and will exercise those rights to deliver the 4,680 acre-feet of water.

“The water behind the dam is the same water being delivered to Navajo chapters between Farmington to even some west of Shiprock,” said John.

John also explained that the second permit authorizing 2,600 acre-feet for the “Run of the River” project serves Navajo municipal and industrial water needs.

Delegate Pete stated that water management is his biggest concern when it comes to all water settlements, such as those involving the San Juan River, Little Colorado River, and Colorado River.

“I do support this project, but we need to make sure to take every drop of what is allocated to us,” said Delegate Pete. “I do not want municipalities banking our Navajo water.”

Delegate Smith requested that the RDC amend the legislation’s language by inserting ‘Area’ between ‘Shiprock’ and ‘Chapters’ in lines 19 and 23 to prevent any confusion about the usage of the water.

The amendment passed 3-0, and now reads ‘Shiprock Area Chapters’.

At the conclusion of the discussion, RDC members voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0102-12.

The legislation will now move on to the Naabik’íyátí Committee, and then on to the Navajo Nation Council for final approval.

The Colorado Ute Settlement Act of 2000 approved the Animas-La Plata Project.

Upon passage of the settlement, the Navajo Nation received storage rights in the Ridges Basin Dam, located in Durango, Colorado, and the Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline.

The Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline is 26 miles long, and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

#

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org